

King County Leadership Forum
Putting Ideas into Action:
Changing our Work Sites to Support Health

Questionnaire Results
May 18, 2005

Obstacles Employees Face in Getting and Staying Healthy

1. Meetings at lunchtime
2. Workload/scheduling prevents taking breaks
3. Too many repetitive tasks
4. Too much sitting for long periods of time
5. Lack of access to exercise facilities during the work day
6. Too much unhealthy food available at the worksite – both in vending machines and that people bring in
7. Offices with no natural daylight
8. Lack of flexibility on use of vacation and sick time
9. Increased commute time, which cuts into time available for exercising
10. Lack of motivation
11. Some exercise facilities, trails, etc. are only for people who are already fit – need more options for people who are not there yet
12. Lack of time to exercise due to workload pressures
13. High stress levels
14. Worksite stresses, e.g., conflicts, inequitable workloads, problems with supervisors

Manager Constraints in Improving Workplace Support for Health

1. Lack of clear policy direction regarding health improvement, e.g.:
 - giving people a choice between bus passes and gym passes
 - defining the food that is appropriate for the worksite
 - defining what equipment is allowable – refrigerators, stoves, etc.
 - managing worksite vending inventory
 - making policies clearer about supervisors' authority to send sick employees home
 - reimbursing employees for participation in health promotion activities
 - allowing non-County agencies to operate programs on County property, e.g., Weight Watchers
 - defining what constitutes a “fragrance-free” environment
 - giving people the option to join (and be reimbursed for) gyms near their homes (if people are reimbursed for downtown memberships)
 - balancing revenue-generating activities with employee health promotion priorities
 - making sure all employees meet the physical requirements of the positions they hold (new hires and existing staff); staff unable to perform physical tasks can injure themselves and co-workers
 - training supervisors to play enhanced role in modeling improved health
 - defining amount of manager flexibility in redesigning work schedules
 - identifying what worksites have various health promotion equipment/facilities - some worksites have a lot, while others have nothing
 - making the length of lunch break (30 minutes vs. 60 minutes) flexible to allow time to exercise
2. Workload management with reduced/inadequate FTEs
3. Employee and manager stress due to staff cutbacks
4. Expertise in employee involvement, how to support employees as they pursue health improvement goals, implementation of health promotion initiatives, conflict resolution
5. County culture has only addressed health when employee work performance was affected
6. Lack of exercise options at some worksites (no gym, no extra rooms, no easy walking nearby, etc.)
7. Lack of employee belief that County has their health in mind and not the bottom line

Ideas for Workplace Improvements that Support Health

1. No meetings at lunchtime
2. Improve managers' workload scheduling skills to allow lunch and breaks
3. Provide choice for bus card/gym membership
4. Use leveraging power of County employees to negotiate low cost gym membership fees (for both downtown gyms and those closer to where people live) and exercise-related items from athletic stores
5. Double the commuter bonus if you walk/bike/run to work
6. RFP private programs, e.g., Weight Watchers, so they can operate in County facilities
7. Clarification re when infectious staff can be sent home
8. Make all County worksites "fragrance-free"
9. Make facility changes, including the following:
 - install bike racks
 - add exercise facilities – use vacant space for classes, exercise equipment, showers
 - clean stairwells and improve lighting
 - add key cards to stairwells, where necessary
 - install full-spectrum bulbs
 - fix the HVAC where worksites have bad heating/cooling
 - add break rooms where employees can relax
 - clean worksites better – remove dust, dirt and other poor air quality contributors
 - have purified water available at all worksites
 - create satellite offices to reduce commute times
 - provide refrigerators
 - add reminders about exercise, healthy eating, etc.
10. Put brochures describing healthy eating, exercise, and lifestyle choices around for people to read
11. Make newspapers available to encourage reading during breaks
12. Provide walking maps for County worksites
13. Add health promotion classes/activities at worksites outside of downtown
14. Make it clearer to employees how to access smoking cessation benefits
15. Have bicycles available for employees to use during the day

16. Provide incentives (financial and other) for employees who get and stay fit
17. Provide discounts on weight loss programs like Trim Spa or Weight Watchers
18. Improve ergonomics of employee workstations
19. Organize group-based health promotion activities, to provide people with more support and motivation to participate
20. Encourage employees to take morning, lunch, and afternoon breaks
21. Find ways to help employees take all their vacation days
22. Help supervisors serve as role models for health promotion
23. Assess the working conditions at worksites and identify priority improvements
24. Offer lunchtime presentations/discussions on health promotion topics
25. Provide blood pressure monitors (like drug stores have) in various worksites
26. Provide on-site flu shots
27. Make hand antiseptic available at all worksites
28. Encourage supervisors to provide leadership on this issue and to involve employees in team-based approaches
29. Make sure employees are aware of the benefits available that promote better health